

No. 162 June 1988

# Hillandale

NEWS



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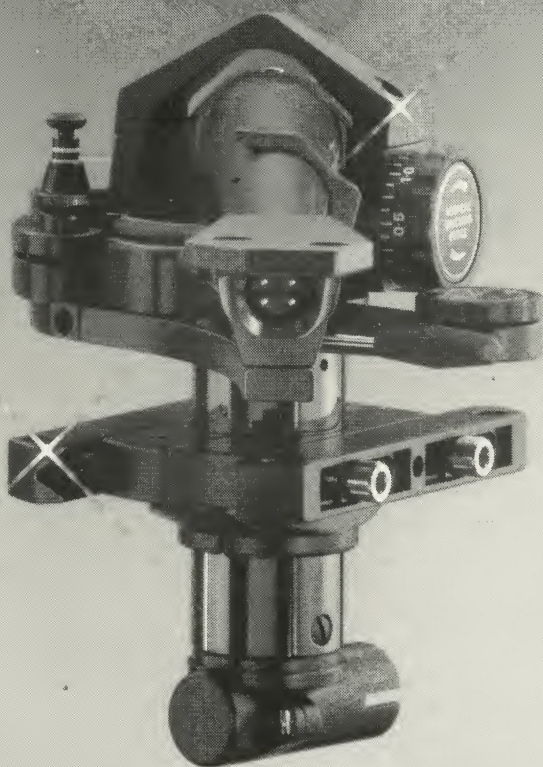
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**Under 25's**    **II**



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# The HILLDALE News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society  
Founded in 1919

Editor: Peter Martland, [REDACTED]

UK.

No. 162 June 1988

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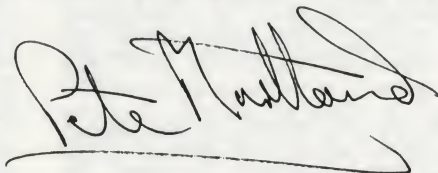
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**T**HIS EDITION of the "Hillandale News" coincides with two important centenaries - that of Berliner's gramophone patents in May, and also Edison's creation of the "perfected" phonograph in June. We must look to the August edition to mark the Berliner anniversary. In this edition we acknowledge the Edison centenary with an article exploring the plans devised by Edison and his London agent Colonel Gouraud to publicise the new invention in Britain.

We have an impressive selection of articles for your consideration beyond the anniversaries. Frank Andrews continues his exposition of "Under 25's", whilst Ken Loughland reassesses a great singer, Alfred Piccaver. For our key article we must look to Adrian Tuddenham who begins an article which will prove to be a milestone in our understanding of the science of preserving and reproducing sounds.

As I write this editorial, the first episode of Jeff Link's BBC radio four series "Revolutions in Sound" has been broadcast. The contribution to that first episode by Peter Adamson really must be noted. Not only was his spoken contribution clear and concise, his recordings of Berliner discs were of a quality so high I found it difficult to accept that they were between ninety and one hundred years old.



# Colonel Gouraud's Present

by Peter Martland

**T**HE CENTENARY OF Edison's perfected phonograph provides us with an opportunity to review one of the more curious, if not comical, aspects of the anniversary; the despatch to his agent in London, George E. Gouraud, of a phonograph, and the publicity he generated to show off the wonders the machine could perform. I look to this small episode to celebrate the centenary of the invention of the perfected phonograph not with any negative feelings towards Edison and his achievements, but because the story of the great inventor's work on the new model has been admirably told by Frank Andrews in earlier editions of this Journal and in his book "The Edison Phonograph the British Connection." Others have also written on this subject.

Let us briefly look at the facts as Gouraud would want us to see them. Edison returned to what his publicists described as "his favourite invention" in 1887, some years after demonstrating the original concept. By June after working continuously for seventy two hours he produced his perfected phonograph. Immediately, we are told, Edison dispatches the machine, complete with cylinders, engraved with Edison's own words, to London for the curious press to marvel at. It is a good story and as Frank Andrews in this Journal (editions 112 and 113) has shown this story ran and ran in the national and provincial press, plus the weeklies and magazines. However, its relation to the truth is somewhat flimsy as an examination of the facts and also papers recently acquired by one of our members shows.

These papers, soon to form a part of a forthcoming publication, reveal that the whole thing was a set up by Edison and Gouraud to gain the maximum publicity for the new invention in order to give a commercial edge over the competition in selling the phonograph to the public.

Our story begins not in June 1888 and a spontaneous gesture by Edison, but on 30th November 1887. A surviving letter from George Gouraud of that date to Hamilton, one of Edison's employees at Menlo Park begins "I am very glad to hear from Mr. Edison that he will send you over in charge of the first phonograph." A further note from Edison himself to Hamilton makes it clear the importance of secrecy during the journey. He said "I forgot to warn you to say nothing to anyone about your mission. I

don't want it to get into papers you are simply 'Botanizing' (sic) for your amusement. Catch on ? Edison." Gouraud's letter of 30th November takes up the secrecy theme. "Of course you will not yield to the curiosity of passengers who may wish to see the instrument on ship as this would diminish the interest and dissipate the mystery with which I have arranged to surround the first appearance of the Phonograph in this country."

So we have seven months before the delivery of the cylinders and machine a clear plan by Gouraud to pull the masterful publicity stunt that occurred in the summer of 1888. We know that he was already priming selected journalists that "something big" was going to come out of Menlo Park in 1888.

Colonel Gouraud visited Edison in the spring of 1888, but alas records of his stay and discussions have not apparently survived. We do know that he sailed for London on the 24th May. We can reasonably surmise that he and Edison put the final touches to the masterplan, perhaps even writing out Edison's first phonogram. This phonogram was dated the 16th June 1888, the words on the cylinder were spoken by Edison himself:

"Friend Gouraud, This is my first mailing phonogram. It will go to you in the regular U.S. mail from New York via Southampton, North German Lloyd steamer "Aller." I send you by Mr. Hamilton a new Phonograph the first one of the new model that has left my hands. It has been put together very hurriedly and is not finished as you will see. I have sent you a quantity of experimental



Phonograph blanks so you can talk back to me. I will send you phonograms of talk and music by every mail leaving here until we get on to the best thing for the purpose. Mrs. Edison and the baby are doing well. The baby's articulation is quite loud enough, but a trifle indistinct. It can be improved, but is not bad for a first experiment. With kind regards, T.A. Edison."

Alas, this original phonogram has not survived and so we are unable to judge the degree of audibility. We can, however, draw from these remarks one important point. Edison did not send over the first model he made, as the Gouraud publicity machine would have us believe. Rather it was "... the first one of the new model that has left my hands . . ." A subtle but important distinction. A further point. Gouraud wants us to believe that the machine was dispatched as soon as Edison got it working. A curious picture presents itself of Edison working flat out for days to construct and make his new machine work, then immediately sending it to London, presumably leaving him with no other copy on which to continue his work. The whole argument will simply not work.

A more likely scenario is Edison having developed his new model, quickly assembled a number of them, one of which he sent to "Friend Gouraud". The machine Colonel Gouraud received was not necessarily the machine on which Edison recorded the first Phonogram, nor was it his experimental bench working model.

We do know that Hamilton and his precious cargo arrived at "Little Menlo", Beulah Road, Upper Norwood, Colonel Gouraud's home in London, on the 26th June 1888, and that the secrecy impressed upon him had been maintained.

Gouraud sprang his surprise on the British public in a letter to the press. The letter unveiling Edison's invention concentrates on outlining the publicity stunt Gouraud and Edison had been formulating over the past months. We should not however be overcritical, to do so would overlook the magnitude of Edison's achievement that clearly astonished Gouraud. In a cablegram, sent

to Edison on the afternoon of Hamilton and the phonograph's arrival, Gouraud expressed this admiration thus: "First phonograph received today every word perfectly clear and distinctly understood by every member of my family including child seven years old accept heartiest congratulations on this unparalleled triumph of mind over matter Gouraud."

The press agreed and Gouraud's letter together with articles and other press comment appeared in voluminous quantities. We know this because Gouraud engaged the services of a press cutting agency to collect the initial and subsequent press coverage of the invention. These Gouraud forwarded to Edison. The existence of such a collection is a researcher's dream, as it obviates the need for much tedious searching of newspaper records. This collection includes not just the initial response to the invention but also Colonel Gouraud's subsequent exposition of the machine to a press reception at his home on the 15th August 1888. Many of the comments made by the press were reproduced in Frank Andrews' article in Nos.112-113 of the "Hillandale." I would highlight one comment at the beginning of an article in the journal "Invention" for the 30th June 1888. That article begins, "We stated in last Saturday's issue that we were credibly informed that the present week would see the phonograph amongst us . . ." Thus Gouraud was indeed priming his journalistic sources to clear their decks for something special and that is just what they got!

Despite Gouraud's assurances in the press and to Edison about the wonderful sound reproduction it is clear from the Colonel's and Hamilton's correspondence to Menlo Park that teething problems remained. In a letter dated July 14th 1888, Hamilton expressed the hope that Edison would send a "perfected knife" - for shaving cylinders, also "different spectacles" - the twin recording/reproducing units, and a governor "as the one on the Gouraud machine was very noisy."

A more serious problem for the Edison people on both sides of the Atlantic was the failure to develop a safe system

whereby phonograms could be posted and would arrive intact. In Hamilton's 14 July letter he asked for more information concerning "envelope boxes", commenting "those of ceresine cracked from contraction but beeswax stand all right." This problem was touched on in Arthur Payne's reply to this letter, dated 24 July 1888. He said that he had received Hamilton's cylinder phonogram "though the cylinder was cracked as indeed were all." The problem of finding suitable wax for casting cylinders was such a problem that Hamilton was advised to "tell Gouraud to have waxes turned in England and send them as fast as he can . . ." to Menlo Park. The problem of cracked cylinders was not just one of finding a better composition in the waxes we learn that "The cylinders were undoubtedly cracked by being opened and handled by the postal officers . . ." The letter continued to advise on formulae for wax, and more importantly to Gouraud and Hamilton details of a consignment of equipment to begin the process of setting up a business for renting the new machines to offices.

We know from the cuttings and other sources that Gouraud had an "at home" for the press and selected celebrities at his London residence on the 15th August 1888. It is from this and other gatherings that some of the earliest surviving cylinders were made. Among those who spoke for the phonograph that summer were Sir Henry Irving and Sir Arthur Sullivan.

In preparing for these promotional sessions one thing was missing - a cylinder from Edison. In a written copy of a Gouraud phonogram to Edison dated 14th July 1888 the Colonel reveals that, notwithstanding the glowing testaments to the press about the clarity of Edison's voice on the 16th June cylinder, the sound quality is ". . . not sufficiently distinct for the ordinary hearer." A painful reminder to Edison of uncertain leap in technology he had made.

Colonel Gouraud had already sent out invitations to the press for them "to come and meet Mr. Edison 'non presentem sed alloquentem'" i.e., not present but speaking. In the Payne letter to Hamilton on the 24th July, Payne was

still trying to get a further recording from Edison. This was clearly not forthcoming and it must have been irksome to all concerned that the press reports of the Gouraud reception all quote Edison's words as he spoke them on the first cylinder of June 1888.

Turning to the reception itself we know that was held on the 15th August 1888. The newspaper cuttings supplied by Romeike's Press Agency of Catherine Street, London, for Gouraud and sent by him to Edison reveal the extent to which the British press regarded the machine and its potential. "Society", on the 18th August 1888, commenced its piece "Mine eyes have seen the eighth wonder of the world. It is a Wax Cone." It then went on to speculate on its potential as a purveyor of Patti's voice, of the speeches of Gladstone, and those of other eminent Victorians. Other newspapers and journals followed suit, it seemed that the concept of sounds being stored up in New York and replayed in London was a breath taking concept and one lovingly explored by the attendant journalists. In all some twenty-five cylinders were available, containing a variety of sounds - some quite curious like "filing, sawing, hammering on an anvil." In addition musical cylinders were played and the Colonel himself demonstrated the machine by recording and playing back some remarks. The "Pall Mall Gazette" reported that "the new instrument broke down during the early part of the afternoon." The teething troubles had not all been ironed out, though the gallant "Pall Mall Gazette" suggested this was due to the sea voyage.

What is clear from all this high jinks at Colonel Gouraud's home in August 1888 is that Gouraud and Edison had pulled off a spectacular publicity coup. No amount of paid advertising could have had the effect on the British press as the initial well primed letter and the subsequent reception. The Phonograph, imperfect though it was, had been well and truly launched in one of its potentially largest markets, Great Britain. Colonel Gouraud's unusual present one hundred years ago paid off in ways that he and the assembled journalists could not have possibly envisaged.



Willy Forst

# Das Lied ist aus.

Ein Tonfilm der  
Superfilm Gesellschaft

Inhalt des Heftes

1. Das Lied ist aus.  
(Frei) nicht, warum ich gehe
2. Ja, wenn das Wörtchen  
„Wenn“ nicht war
3. Adieu, mein kleiner  
Gardeoffizier!
4. Die Liebe, die ist wie ein  
Tonfilm!
5. Prinz Kuno und die Post-  
meisterstochter

von  
Walter Reisch  
Regie:  
Geza v. Bolvary  
Musik von  
Robert Stoltz

ALROBI  
Liane Haid

Robert Stoltz's music — see LETTERS

# Record Processing for Improved Sound

by Adrian Tuddenham and Peter Copeland

**I**T IS DIFFICULT to define a boundary between just playing a record and processing it. Although processing is generally thought of as something done to the electrical signal after it leaves the pickup, at the outset it involves things which most collectors do as a matter of course, such as cleaning the record and selecting the right needle or stylus. At the other extreme there is the use of electronics and (dare I mention it?) computers. On the assumption that not all readers have a Ph.D. in electronics and computing this article will be confined to describing what these things do, rather than the minutiae of how they do it.

## WHY PROCESS ?

In his article "The Survival of 78 rpm Records" (Hillandale News 159, December 1987) on the ways records were mistreated, Alan Hindmarch made the point that records were pressed in their thousands, and were regarded as disposable, easily replaced items. There is the feeling that sooner or later another copy will turn up, and in the past this has been generally true. Even nowadays some collectors and dealers will unceremoniously dump records which are only slightly blemished, without a second thought.

Obviously this is a state of affairs which cannot continue indefinitely, and attitudes are beginning to change, hopefully before it is too late. Collectors are realising that irreplaceable material is being lost, and even shattered records cannot be casually thrown away any more in case they are the last known copy of that particular item.

There has been a growing interest in recent years into ways of processing damaged recordings (and good copies too) so as to get the best from them. Present day professionals in the field of record processing range from the academic research approach of the National Sound Archive through the superb and entertaining re-issues by John R.T. Davies to the controversial modernisations in stereo by Robert Parker.

Many amateur collectors have expressed an interest in better sound quality from their own collections, but most feel it is the province of the electronic 'boffin' or magician, and not something they themselves can benefit from. All too

often, publicised 'improvements' are the result of showmanship rather than science and, naturally, are jealously guarded secrets. The presence in the market of an assortment of electronic wonder-boxes, some of which do not live up to their makers' extravagant claims, has not helped.

Processing has been condemned as 'artificial', having no place in 78 reproduction. What does not seem to be realised is that this artificiality extends much further back in the production chain. For instance, the recording medium is unable to accept bass signals at as great a strength as treble ones, so artificial tonal emphasis has to be applied during cutting to allow for this. Loud passages could overload, and quiet ones would be lost in the background noise, so various means had to be used to reduce this range in the studio. To obtain a balance of instruments which would sound natural when the record was played the performers sometimes had to be arranged in places which they would not normally have chosen and, of course, the time limit on one side of a disc meant that the music they were playing was often re-scored.

Yet no-one seems to object to the replay characteristic of a machine correcting for the bass loss and sometimes treble pre-emphasis of the recording system. Can any reader recall anyone advocating that the E.M.G. ought to sound tinny because this is how an unequalised record would sound? Groove damage and surface noise are also unintentional, so if a means were found to reduce them too, without affecting the recorded sound, it surely ought to be welcomed, not condemned. One view is



that records are a window on the past and anything which removes some of the dirt from the window is worthwhile; if other people then wish to 'colour' the scene with reverberation, synthesised bass or treble, and stereo, then that is a matter for their own personal preferences.

In this article the components of the reproduction chain will be examined from the viewpoint of the enthusiast who wants to improve existing sound quality or extend the range of records playable to include rarer copies in poor condition. It must be borne in mind that (contrary to what the salesmen would have us believe), no one component will bestow magical properties on a system; it might even show up unsuspected defects. Improvement is a matter for careful thought and open minded analysis of weaknesses.

**A Mechanical Method.** For a long while the standard way of dealing with strident worn or damaged records on an acoustic machine was by removal of treble. "Put a sock in it," was an excellent way to achieve simultaneous volume and tone control with the added subtlety that changing the consistency and position of the obstructing garment could allow a degree of balance between the two effects.

## FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS

**Turntables and Arms.** Before the early 1930s a variety of speeds was in use and a variable speed turntable to cope with these is a 'must'. Some modern moulded plastic units with tiny 'model' motors can be made to perform adequately with suitable electronics, but their quality and potential life spans are dubious. The standard 'shaded pole' gramophone motor runs at nearly constant speed related to the alternating frequency of the mains supply; a small amount of adjustment is possible in some machines by varying the load on the motor with a magnetic 'eddy current' brake. If the limited range of adjustment this gives is inadequate then a mechanical variable speed device between the motor and turntable becomes necessary. A beautifully engineered mechanism of this type was to be found in the Swiss-made Lenco deck which is

popular for professional vari-speed work. Even this will not cope with 90 rpm Pathés without modification, but they can, instead, be played at 45 rpm, tape-recorded using a multi-speed open-reel machine, and doubled in speed on playback. Owners of clockwork machines will be chuckling at this: they have no such problem.

To deal with jumping or locked grooves it is useful to be able to creep up on them from behind by playing the record in reverse and using tape to get the sound the right way round again. The direction of rotation of the 'shaded pole' motor used in many professional units is fixed by the orientation of components during assembly. The trouble involved in dismantling and reassembling it for a direction change means it is simplest to keep a specially adapted unit just for reverse playing. The idler pressure must be increased as it is now being forced out of engagement and the cartridge must be mounted in mirror-image fashion on a pickup arm which is swung around so as to trail. If a modern stylus assembly meets a crack head on it will almost certainly be instantly written off: absent-mindedly turning a cracked disc backwards by hand to find a starting point is also the precursor of regret. Other solutions to the problems of reversal are the substitution of some ingenious reversing idler mechanism, the use of two separate motors, or the rewinding of the existing motor with extra phase shifting windings. One of the authors has performed this last operation on a Lenco motor and found that although electrically switchable reverse is very convenient, the conversion is not a task to be undertaken lightly. Small reversible D.C. motors are also available through 'surplus' suppliers and modellers' shops, but these will entail a lot of mechanical work, and the design and construction of accurate electronic or mechanical speed control gear to adapt them. Some are noisy, both mechanically and electrically, and may produce rumble if they are not well balanced.

When playing a record in the normal clockwise direction, each groove wall alternately applies accelerating force to the stylus causing it to vibrate; the

wear and tear damage from this pressure therefore occurs alternately on the two groove walls. By playing a record with reversed rotation the opposite, undamaged groove wall now provides the force. There are those who claim that this gives a worthwhile improvement in sound quality with some types of damage; others have found little difference or even a slight deterioration. In theory if a stylus remains in contact with both groove walls at all times, as it should, then it will trace exactly the same path in either direction. In practice dynamic effects may be significant, particularly with hill and dale discs and cylinders.

Some discs are pressed eccentrically or have the centre hole displaced. This gives rise to a regular slow pitch change on playback, which is known as 'wow'. If the disc itself is valuable and damage must be avoided it is possible to centre it by stacking several spare discs under it on the turntable, raising it above the spindle. It can then be adjusted, by listening and watching the pickup, until the wow is at a minimum. The adjustments are very delicate and should not be attempted with the turntable running unless you are very good at catching records in flight! For the situation where the sound is more important than the appearance of the disc, the hole can be extended by careful scraping. Peter Copeland of the National Sound Archive recommends the use of the third notch of an Automobile Association call-box key for this purpose. If the label is then marked to indicate the required direction of displacement, the disc can be played concentrically in the future with minimal fuss.

If you intend playing 16" and 20" discs you should plan your turntable and arm layout for this at the outset, as it is difficult to rectify later. The advantage of long pickup arms is that, as they swing across the disc, the changes of angles which occur are relatively small, as are the distortion effects and unwanted forces. The disadvantage is that the mass to be accelerated by a warped or eccentric disc is greater, even though the static force (tracking weight) is balanced so as to be the same. On uphill the stylus may be forced towards the cartridge, giving distortion and

unwanted noises; on downhill it may lose contact with the surface altogether. Both could cause damage to stylus and disc. Long arms tend to be more flexible and, if curved, can be shock excited by cracks into a twisting oscillation which lengthens the duration of the 'thud'. This not only increases the proportion of sound spoiled at each revolution of the record but can overload the amplifier with low frequency oscillations, sounding downright unpleasant. A straight arm is simple to construct from a piece of lightweight tube, and any necessary angle can be introduced at the cartridge mounting. Robustness is an important factor. Many modern arms and cartridges are excellent for LPs, but tend to suffer when mauled in the course of frequent stylus changing, playing records with cracks, warps, bits missing, etc.

The parallel tracking arm has recently become popular on a number of modern record decks. It combines the advantages of both long and short arms with those of screw feed cylinder and disc machines. A short arm is freely pivoted from a small carriage, motor driven along a track which is either behind or partly over the record. Electronic sensors cause the carriage drive motor to operate in the appropriate direction until the arm is at right angles to the carriage and track. During playing this angle is maintained by small continuous correcting movements of the motor so that the stylus tip traverses the half diameter of the record in exactly the same way as the cutter did; the stylus has virtually no sideways work to do. The changes of angles which were reduced by a long arm are now eliminated, and the low mass of the short arm needs less force to track warps.

**Needles and Styli.** The needle or stylus is a vital factor in the replay of records. If the wrong one is used it is a waste of time trying to correct the deficiencies further down the chain of equipment. This point cannot be emphasised strongly enough. In electrical reproduction there is nothing else which will produce as much improvement in quality at a single stroke as a change to the correct size, shape, and angle of stylus.



In older reproducers the replaceable needle is ground to the groove cross-section by abrasive particles in the disc material. This process means that a sharp new needle exerts a high pressure on its limited area of contact at the start of a record until it is ground in, accounting for some of the damage found in the first few seconds of many records. Badly worn needles develop a pair of flats; the angles where the flats meet the curve of the unworn needle shape act as obtuse cutting edges, wiping out higher frequencies from the grooves in a particularly noisy and unpleasant way.

It might be thought that needles made of softer materials should cause less damage to the disc. However, in engineering, it is common experience that where a soft and hard material rub together it is the hard one which becomes worn away; it would not be surprising if this applied to discs too. Claims have been made that higher frequencies are 'wiped off' discs by repeated playing with fibre needles. A theory has been proposed that the low thermal conductivity of fibre produces micro-melting of the groove wall. Whether this form of damage is significant or is any worse than the damage caused by repeated playing with a steel needle is a matter on which the authors are not qualified to comment. Certainly there is a risk that sharp-angled particles of worn disc material or steel needle fragments could become embedded in a soft needle and damage the grooves quite badly. Any such particle will stop the continuous wearing of the fibre which would normally have exposed a fresh surface, and the damage will continue until the particle itself is worn away or is shaken out, or the needle is re-sharpened ready for the next side. Fibre, thorn, and 'soft tone' needles are resilient and reduce the force applied to the coupling lever of the sound box. At higher frequencies the force needed to produce diaphragm movement would increase, and so these frequencies, which include some scratch and some of the music, become reduced in amplitude. In electrical pickups which accept needles, the vibrating mass is much smaller, and this reduction in high frequencies is negligible.

To digress slightly, a resilient

trailing needle has a benefit which is not often recognised. When a record is cut, the front facet of the cutting tip is at right angles to the direction of surface travel and consequently at right angles to the groove it is producing. Under conditions of loud and high frequency sound, however, the cutter is slewing rapidly from side to side, and the groove is being cut at a considerable angle to the direction of surface travel, which means that it is no longer at right angles to the facet which is producing it. The groove is thus narrowed in width although it is still the same depth. This happens twice per complete cycle of the sound wave, where the groove is slewing fastest, and has the effect of squeezing the replay needle or stylus upwards. Resilient trailing needles and modern stereo cartridges are compliant enough in the vertical direction to accommodate this 'pinch effect', but records which have been played with other things are often damaged.

The very first lateral discs had etched groove cross-sections which were virtually uncontrolled. Soon grooves were cut into wax, and their cross-sections reproduced accurately by the electroplating and pressing process, but there was still no standardisation of groove shapes between manufacturers or even individual cuts. The V groove with a small bottom radius was invented in 1913 by Packman, and some manufacturers used it from then on. This accounts for the noticeable improvement in sound quality of their products when reproduced on modern equipment. Unfortunately most manufacturers continued to use a U shaped groove until well into the 1930s. A ball-shaped stylus sitting in a straight V groove will always be exactly on centre, regardless of groove angle, provided the corner at the groove bottom is of smaller radius than the stylus tip. Attempting to play a U grooved 78 with a small radius stylus is like rolling a tennis ball along a broad rainwater gutter; it doesn't stay on centre, but zigzags up and down the sides in a haphazard way. The excruciating racket this produces in terms of noise and distortion is what many members of the public think 78s are meant to sound like. Too large a stylus, on the other hand, tends to sit across

the top of the groove and jump on loud notes. Somewhere in between is a range of sizes, all of which can sound reasonable, although they may not fit perfectly.

For the most accurate results from a U shaped groove, the 'elliptical' or 'truncated elliptical' stylus is recommended. The elliptical stylus is shaped like a conical stylus which has become squashed oval; it sits across the groove making contact at two places. It more accurately follows the path of the original cutting stylus than does the conical tip, and was originally developed to reduce the distortion on high fidelity discs. The advantage is that whereas the two points of contact with the groove wall of a spherical tip rotate when tracking a slewing groove, causing it to follow a slightly distorted path, the elliptical stylus, being shaped more like the original cutter, does not suffer this 'tracing distortion' or the previously mentioned pinch effect to anything like the same extent. As there are only two points of contact, all the tip below the level of contact is redundant; it adds to the stylus mass and is liable to produce noise from touching debris in the groove bottom or the bottom itself if the groove cross section is unsuitable. In the 'truncated elliptical' stylus, the surplus material has been removed during manufacture, and the final shape resembles the business end of a part-worn carpenter's pencil; all the advantages of the elliptical stylus are retained, and dirty and misshapen grooves can be played with less noise. Nothing is perfect, however, and the elliptical tips reproduce much more noise from a worn copy than does a spherical one.

The damage done to records by a skidding soundbox or careless handling is usually confined to the upper part of the groove, and some of that done by steel needles to the lower reaches. Damaged areas can therefore be avoided by using a slightly smaller or larger stylus to play the groove wall respectively below or above the damaged area. A range of styli for this purpose, in either spherical or elliptical shape, is available from Expert Pickups, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Readers requiring further advice on the subject of groove sizes and stylus selection should contact Mr. W.D. Hodgson at that address.

John R.T. Davies states that the angle at which Cellulose Nitrate shears during cutting is different from that of wax. The effect of this is not always audible, but sometimes a distinct improvement can be obtained by careful choice of replay stylus angle. He has had a set of styli of differing angles made so as to optimise his transcriptions: vertical tips are used for older pressings from wax masters; 'raked' tips for nitrate direct replay discs and some (but not all) pressings from nitrate masters.

**Surface Treatment.** How records should be cleaned is a contentious topic, but the difference between playing a dirty record and the same one after cleaning can be very striking. Moreover, if a record is not cleaned thoroughly, further damage will be done at each subsequent playing by the abrasive effect of any dirt left in the grooves. Water is a good solvent for many types of dirt - the freshest distilled water is obtained by breathing on the record - but all traces of it should be removed as quickly and thoroughly as possible after cleaning, as some records are slightly water soluble. Because capillary action will hold water in the groove bottom drying a record is not always as easy as it might first seem; a jet of dry, clean air is possibly the most gentle way but it may leave a sludge behind.

There are circumstances, however, when the cure can be worse than the disease, particularly with laminated records and nitrate surfaces which have dried out noticeably. With valuable records the use of liquids of any sort for cleaning carries a risk which should be considered before anything other than gentle dry brushing is attempted. In any case it is always a good idea to try out a small quantity of liquid first, somewhere where it won't affect the playing surface.

Most organic solvents spell instant death to a record: they will dissolve the surface in seconds!

The contact pressure between a needle and the record surface produced by the weight of a sound box suggests that the absence of some form of lubricant at this point is downright



cruelty. Whether adequate lubricant exists in the record material or some needs to be added is a subject on which a great deal of knowledge and opinion is available within this Society. From the point of view of reproduction with a lightweight cartridge, problems may be encountered with records which have been treated in the past, and collectors should be aware of these.

Most furniture polishes are hygroscopic; that is, they attract moisture from the air. Shellac and other binders in the record surface are a good nutritional substrate for certain fungi which flourish in the microscopically damp conditions. They penetrate the record surface, digesting the binder and allowing the slate dust to become loose. Dirty fingerprints and some paper wrappers can also encourage fungal growth, and some surface treatments may chemically soften the binder over a number of years. In each case, once the slate dust has come loose you may as well try to get a tune off a sheet of sandpaper.

Dirt, loose slate dust, and fungal debris stuck to previous lubricants form a paste which builds up an evil wedge under the stylus during the first few plays. The fit of the stylus in the groove is spoiled and it is knocked from side to side, damaging the groove wall at each impact.

If the distorted sound doesn't warn the listener of what is happening then the jumping on loud passages, which soon follows, ought to. Sometimes the tenacity of this lump of gunge to the stylus could be the envy of a modern glue manufacturer, and attempts to dislodge it come close to wrecking the stylus mounting.

One situation where a modern pickup does benefit from lubrication is when using a sapphire stylus to play aluminium discs such as those perpetrated by the machines which used to be found at the end of entertainment piers. The surface of aluminium oxidises the moment it is cut and exposed to air: sapphire is also a form of aluminium oxide. Bashing together two pieces of similar material is a recipe for disaster, and something is needed which can separate them and withstand the high contact pressures. A similar situation exists in the hypoid bevel gear of a motor car rear axle, and 'Hypoy' extreme pressure lubricants are sold for the purpose. Thinned with paraffin (kerosene or lamp oil) they could be used on these discs. (Try to avoid soaking the label). Some copies of these records appear to be the last bastion of random groove cross-section, so the manufacturer's instruction to "always use a wooden needle" might still be best.

\* To be Continued \*

## Forthcoming London Meetings

Seven p.m. at the Bloomsbury Institute, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2

21st June

**CLEANING UP THE SOUND** Peter Thomas, Engineering Services Manager, Outside Studios, BBC Radio, will demonstrate the fruits of his work to achieve optimum replay quality from shellac records. This is a field which is surely of interest to us all.

26th July

**ISSUES AND REISSUES** Our member and RVAS Chairman Gordon Bromly will talk about notable vocal recordings which have been reissued after being withdrawn from the catalogues, and thereby given a new lease of life.

20th August 1988

**REGAL RECORDS** Frank Andrews will deal with this topic at a meeting to be held at Neasden on a Saturday. Further details will be given in our next edition.

# The Under Twenty-Fives

by FRANK ANDREWS

## PART 2: BETWEEN THE WARS

IN CONTRAST to those issued earlier, the new discs under 10 inches generally progressed from smaller sizes to larger as time passed. A new feature was that many of these records catered for children of up to ten, and were tastefully presented. There appeared to be two reasons for producing small cheap records; one to cater for those who could not afford better makes, the other to encourage buyers to explore the repertories that the 10 inch and 12 inch sizes offered, an appetite later stimulated by the new wireless.

It is likely that the first post-war "small" records offered were "Mother Goose Records" of April 1920, combined records and books put out by The Herman Darewski Publishing Company and imported from The Talking Book Corporation of Fifth Avenue, New York. The records were pressed in Atlanta, Georgia, by The Southern States Phonograph Company, who reckoned to turn out 50,000 a day, and were distributed by The Emerson Phonograph Company. Darewski's were still selling these books and records in 1922.<sup>1</sup>

Further importations arrived from America before any British firms got into production; these were Harper Brothers' Bubble Books, called The Harper-Columbia Book that Sings. Each book was well illustrated and held three single-sided discs labelled with the same name. The English publishers Hodder & Stoughton acquired the right to the printed albums and put them on sale in November 1920 at the same time as Harpers', but their Bubble Books were The Hodder-Columbia Books that Sing. Twelve Bubble Book albums were issued.<sup>2</sup> Bubble Records were 5½ inches, and the last additions to the book series were made in November 1921.



The success of these little records inspired three British firms, apparently independently, to enter the small disc market in 1921 with records of 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> and 5½ inches. The Sound Recording Company Ltd. marketed single-sided Mimosa records, at first with a compressed core beneath the playing surface; these were followed by a solid stock record, both made by The Crystalate Manufacturing Company. Mimosas sold for sixpence at Woolworth's; they were given an 'M' prefix number to start with, but this was changed to 'P' and appeared

1. At this time they were also offering private recording facilities.
2. In Canada they were sold as "The Mission-Columbia Books". In Great Britain the Columbia Company did not handle the Bubble records.



in October 1921. Sound Recording also produced The Little Pop Record and The Little Pop de-Luxe Record, double-sided and costing a shilling in December 1921. The first issue was of 50 titles, rising to 100 by June 1922. The Mimosas grew to a double-sided 6 and 7 inches as the 1920s progressed, and from their masters were pressed the various customers' labels: Kiddyphone, Pigmy, Oliver, Marspen (for Marks & Spencer), The Beacon, The Butterfly, and Savana (for Rose, Morris & Co.).

The second British maker, The Aeolian Company Ltd., with its Universal Music Company, entered the field with 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inch Little Marvel discs, all those known being double-sided. Sold in Woolworth's, the label carried a 'W' above the centre hole. The first were sold by their matrix numbers, but on being increased to 6 inches a 1,000 catalogue series was started, and there were special Nursery Records. Little Marvel matrices were used to press Vocalion records for Selfridges, Boots the Chemists, the Beltona Bairns Book for J.G. Murdoch & Co., and The Fairy for export.

The third company to enter the children's record trade at this time was J.E. Hough Ltd., with the 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inch The Bell. Hough's matrices were used to press under other labels: Marspen (again for Marks & Spencer), Savana (for Rose, Morris), Boots the Chemists, The Little Briton, John Bull Record, The Dinky, and The Fairy. In due course The Bell became a 6 inch record.

Seeing the success enjoyed in Great Britain by The Bubble Books, the Bob-o-Link Talking Book with its pair of 7 inch records was offered in Great Britain from 1922 at 6s.0d., 4s.6d., 2s.6d., and 1s.6d. according to repertoire, with eight books on offer. These were American publications from A.G. Gilbert & Company of New Haven, Connecticut. Artists included the tenor Charles Harrison and Maud and Miska Petersham as recorders. Two additional books were added in 1923 with Victor Valente as the recording artist.

The H.M.V. records made for the Queen Mary's Dolls House gramophone, on show at the Wembley Empire Exhibition in 1924, were the smallest discs ever made in this country, and had a diameter of 1<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches. One title, The National Anthem, was put on sale to the public in October 1924 at 6d., but these little records could not be played on the standard gramophone as the spindle hole was too small. When found today they can command quite a lot of money.

Mention should be made of those records used in recording booths in public places after electrical recording had arrived. These were usually made of an alloy, and the Kodisk record is an early example. British Kodisk also made a 6 inch commercial record called The Kiddie, with various coloured pictures on the reverse sides. These were produced about 1922. The Kodisk business was begun in the United States by Victor Emerson and his son after they parted from The Emerson Phonograph Company. A type familiar in Great Britain in the mid-thirties were Voice Records Ltd. of 56 Moorgate, London E.C. These were 5 inch alloy and cost 6d to record a personal message, with spoken advertising material on the reverse.

The 1923/4 began with a further American importation, Little Tots' Nursery Tunes, selling three 7 inch discs to an album with separate picture cards. They were published in New York by The Plaza Music Company and were handled by Barnett Samuel. Later the matrices were sent over to Britain and the records

pressed by Crystalate, who produced 7 inch Mimosas and Olivers from them. The Little Tots' Nursery Tunes albums sold for 4s.9d. and nine were issued by November 1924.

The seven inch disc made a return to the His Master's Voice catalogue in December 1924, the first newcomers since the last 7 inch Zonophones had come into it in 1908. The new series was devoted entirely to a children's repertoire, and in line with the BBC's Children's Hour of those days, artists were labelled as "Auntie" and "Uncle". The catalogue numbers were prefixed 'AS' and recorded within the matrix system then in use but given a 'dd' prefix. These records were presented six to an album, and later additions were recorded electrically.

The first of other makes to be electrically recorded were for The British Homophone Co. Ltd. by The Gramophone Company. Homophone had no pressing plant of its own, and had been getting records made by the Vocalion and Pathé companies. Towards the end of 1925 it contracted The Gramophone Company to press its Homochords and a new disc called Sterno with blue, grey and white labels, and for 6 inch Homo Baby and Sterno Baby discs. These last two went on sale early in 1926, using a matrix system with an 'EE' prefix. Either the Gramophone or Homophone companies may have tried to break into the Woolworth trade, as one disc was pressed and indexed as "Woolworth's", but labelled The Conquest; however, Woolworth's never took what would have been their first electrically recorded disc. British Homophone had two unknown sub-contract customers who owned The Jolly Boys and Dixy labels. All five labels carried 'C' and 'D' suffixes to catalogue numbers for side identification.

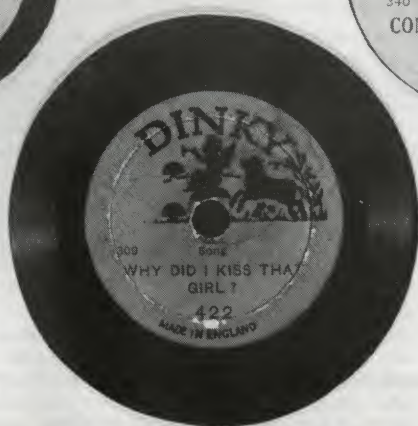
The Marconi electrical process was acquired by Vocalion in April 1926, and in the following June a 1s.3d. eight inch record was brought out. This was the Broadcast, and its masters were used to press Unison Records for the Cooperative Wholesale Society. In the August, manufacture of all 10 inch and 12 inch Vocalions ceased, leaving the company as sole British makers of discs all under 10 inches.

In September 1926 Edison Bell stopped making The Bell records, which were now electrically recorded, and brought out a new 6 inch disc The Crown, in the month following. Although using P.G.A.H. Voigt's electrical system, Crown discs were no challenge to 8 inch Broadcasts. A special series of The Crown with blue labels was made for use with the Picturegram gramophone where a paper roll of a nursery rhyme story moved in time with the recorded story.

During 1927 Crystalate introduced a 7 inch Imperial Junior Record, with standard repertoire. The company improved its image to meet competition in the 1928/29 season when it replaced the Mimosas and brought in its 7 inch yellow labelled The Victory records. These were claimed to be long playing. Arthur Haddy joined Crystalate at this time and the company's recording standards were greatly improved.

In January 1928 Columbia took the unusual step of recording a double-sided 6 inch disc for its oldest customer, Roberts of Croydon. It featured the Debroy Somers Band and was numbered R1. Twelve months later it did the same again with the Piccadilly Players, and in January 1930 with Jack Payne and the BBC Dance Orchestra. These two records were R2 and R3.





To try and combat Vocalion's successful Broadcast 8 inch discs - playing for as long as a 10 inch record - Edison Bell launched its 8 inch Radio record in March 1928. Vocalion introduced a smaller disc in February 1929, the 6 inch Broadcast Junior Record for 6d., and also a companion Nursery Series.

The Raphael Tuck Postcard Gramophone Records were advertised in March 1929; they had a 3½ inch disc at the centre of the postcard, and four postcards in one envelope cost a shilling. There were 28 titles offered, arranged in categories, and surviving examples show that outdated postcard stock was used extensively, as in any case the record surface obscured the centre features of the card.

Emile Berliner, the man who began disc production in 1889, and whose records were never larger than 7 inches, died on August 3rd 1929.

The record industry now began embarking on manufacturing unbreakable types of record, a plastic or celluloid surface on a card base. Such a record was the 9 inch Pik-Nik of June 1930, probably among the last productions of Worldecho Ltd., who shared premises in Charlotte Street with Pik-Nik. Only six Pik-Nik records are known to have been distributed before it seems the company went bankrupt. In October 1930 The Goodson Gramophone Co. Ltd. went into production of 7 inch children's records in albums of 5 discs. Made of white Rhodoid, other small Goodsons were used for advertising, Sketch cigarettes being one such customer.

British Homophone took over Pathé's old factory at Stonebridge Park, London N.W., from Columbia at the end of 1929, and by putting out its Solex record, allowed it to compete on level terms with 8 inch Broadcast and Radio records. The Solex label seems to have been the first to carry a stroboscopic edge. Homophone also produced a 4 inch Babygram around this time.

A Nursery Rhymes series on Victory was offered by Crystalate, with alphabet letters instead of numbers, as were records labelled as "Nursery Rhymes" first advertised in November 1930. Crystalate's 7 inch Victory series for Woolworth's ceased production in April 1931 and 8 inch Eclipse records were marketed instead. With a sixpenny 8 inch record, Crystalate had stolen a march on its chief competitors Vocalion, Edison Bell, and British Homophone, particularly as the Eclipses were now being recorded so well. There were three catalogue series, the plain numbered, the SC prefixed series including a special nursery series, and "What Your Birthday Stars Foretell", numbered by the matrix.\* On occasion, Crystalate had issued some give-away 3½ inch Imperials. One promoted the acquisition of the services of Jack Payne and his Orchestra in 1932; later a similar disc with the recent Rex label allowed Reginald Dixon to introduce his new Wurlitzer at the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool, now to be heard exclusively on Rex. Crystalate, however, had set its sights on taking over Vocalion, but before this happened the latter enlarged its Broadcast and Unison records from 8 to 9 inches from September 1931, and closed these catalogues in 1933. The 8 inch Edison Bell Radio Record failed to survive the competition of the 6d Eclipse, and ceased after April 1932. The Eclipses lasted on Woolworth's

\* The company now styled itself The Crystalate Gramophone Record Manufacturing Co. Ltd.



counters until August 1935 when Crystalate introduced an even larger record for 6d, the 9 inch Crown, but the sixpenny ten inch record was beyond an economic possibility.

A new flexible unbreakable 10 inch record was promoted in the Spring of 1932. This was the Durium Record from Durium Products Ltd., with micro-groove recordings on one side only, and with a playing time of both sides of a standard 10 inch disc. Later, three 4 inch discs in a set called "Durium For the Young Folk" was offered for 6d. Each disc carried three nursery rhymes and the backs illustrated the rhymes, while other small Duriums featured language instruction from Linguaphone and others. Small Duriums too were very suitable as give-away advertising records. The Durium Company did not exist very long as such, but its "Dubrico" patented process was used on small advertising discs from Sound Distributors Ltd., who also made Talkie cigarette cards and those for the Record Tobacco Company, discs of 2½ inch size. A further customer of particular interest was Aircraft Products Ltd., a mail order firm in novelties of 89 New Oxford Street, London W.C., and founded in 1934. A little album with six 5 inch single-sided Dubrico discs was marketed, two songs by a well-known music hall star being recorded on each. They were advertised as having "a 10 inch record duration of play", and although the purchaser was advised to "watch for a new series every month", none but the first series has been reported; these records were good value at 1s.9d. the set.

Kid-Kord 7 inch discs were produced by British Homophone in December 1932. The first six records came out in a blue-covered album and cost 4s.6d., a second album followed shortly and a later set in a red album gave a verbal and pictorial description of animals found in zoos. Homophone's 8 inch Solex records had not been a success and in June 1933 the company issued the 6 inch Plaza records, while the 8 inch matrices were used to press records under Lewis's Peacock's, and Selfridge's Stores labels, and Kid-Kord matrices were used to make "Nursery Records" for an unknown customer. In due course all Kid-Kords passed to Decca when British Homophone ceased its domestic record trade.

In 1936 King Edward VIII's Abdication Speech was recorded by a number of small companies - the large ones in Great Britain would not touch it - and it is believed to have been issued on a small unbreakable disc, but this has not been seen.

A new 8 inch disc to be called the Broadcast New Series was advertised in September 1936 by Crystalate, but these had been "round before" with Eclipse and earlier 8 inch Broadcast labels. They did not last long because Decca stopped them when Crystalate was taken over in March 1937. Decca also stopped supplying the 9 inch Crown records to Woolworth's, and record counters in the "Nothing Over Sixpence" store disappeared after sixteen years. To record, pay performers, pay royalties, produce, press, package, distribute nationwide, and allow Woolworth's a profit for sixpence was incredible, perhaps impossible, and no doubt that is why Decca closed up this trade.

## THE SMALL DISCS AFTER WORLD WAR II

No small records seem to have been marketed in the United Kingdom before microgroove records came out in 1949-50. When they did come out they were usually made of vinylite, generally 78s, and some continued to flourish

alter all other 78 records were a thing of the past. They were nearly all aimed at the children's market.

Oriole Records Ltd. in about 1951 had an 8 inch disc called "Happy Birthdays", and a label with a KCI number. Esquire Records, normally associated with jazz and classical music produced a Kiddies' Repertoire in May 1951, with numbers starting at 7-001. The Children's Record Company of Kensal Road, London W.10, associated with Classics Club and Saga LPs, produced 7 inch Cricket records.

Gala Nursery Records were made by Selcol Products Ltd. These 7 inch discs were probably recorded by Lyntone Recordings Ltd. who make the flimsies, and there was also a Selcol record in shellac. Gala probably imported masters from the United States for the 6 inch Gala Goldentones.

Another 6 inch disc was Kiddietunes - Extra Long Play, distributed by Lumar Ltd. of Swansea, and started by Louis Marx.

In 1962 Pickwick International Inc. (G.B.) Ltd. produced a catalogue of 36 long-playing 78s called "Happy Time Records". Advertised as The Big 7 they played for as long as the standard 10 inch 78, by now an obsolete entity.

Three labels that defy further investigation were 7 inch discs from ERD Studios, a make called "Birthday Wishes" with a starting number of MC100 and a small record called Butytone.

To conclude, Melody Cards with a 6 inch disc on a 7 inch square card were popular at one time, and advertising cards such as the Nestlé New Stars card of 8½ in. x 8½ in. whereon was pressed a thin circular film of recording 7 inches across.

It is likely that many of these small size records will continue as holiday cards, promotions and advertising, but all future issues will be in slow-speed form. Few people now have 78 equipment, it is now 25 years or more since 78 records were last in the catalogues.



#### CITY OF LONDON PHONOGRAPH & GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY - BRANCH SECRETARIES

EAST FIFE	E.J. Goodall, [REDACTED]
SEVERN VALE	Lawrie Wilson, [REDACTED]
CHILTERN	S. Jellyman, [REDACTED]
MIDLANDS	G. Burton, [REDACTED]
NEWCASTLE	(Clockwork Music Group) P.Bailey, [REDACTED]
YORKSHIRE	P. Austwick, [REDACTED]
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA	C. Gracie, [REDACTED]





*In the Film, " The Lion's Bride," Berlin, 1913*

Emmy Destinn and Friend - see LETTERS

## Letters

Dear Mr. Martland,

This is a plea for somebody to write an article on Fonotipia. Notwithstanding the fact that Fonotipia was in the vanguard of classical vocal recording, at least before World War I, it seems very hard to get information about the company. It started in 1904; but then what? How long did it go on? Did it stick to its policy of recording only classical music - and not only vocal? When did it wind up, or who took it over? Lindstrom? And what about an article on aspects of the records? Now that the Milan recording registers have been found, all sorts of delights could be unearthed (such as who was Romano Ciaroff, tenor, on my one and only Fonotipia record?). Frank Andrews is the man for the company history at least. The only article I can recall is Hevingham-Root's on the 13 " discs in Hillandale in 1969.

Yours sincerely, G. W. Taylor  
[redacted] 16th February

### Frank Andrews replies:

Readers might like to know that I have in fact written a history of the Fonotipia Companies. It was published in our member Ernie Bayly's "Talking Machine Review", numbers 40 to 45 and 48/9, under the title "Fonotipia Fragmentia." Back numbers of these and other editions of the "Talking Machine Review" are available from Ernie Bayly, [redacted]  
[redacted]

The indefatigable Frank Andrews also sent me a list of the following disc companies whose histories he has written: The International Zonophone Company; The Neophone Companies, and the Marathon Companies. In addition, Frank has chronicled the following phonograph companies: Britannia Records, Star Records, Electric Records, Lambert Records, International Phonograph & Indestructible Records, and the Murdoch Columbia Indestructible Records. With regard to Romano Ciaroff-Ciarini (to give him his full name) Frank tells me that he released 29 sides on Fonotipia. (Ed.)

Dear Peter,

Today the first issue of the "new" Hillandale News arrived. I'm writing to make a suggestion which I feel will help the Journal retain its high quality.

Let me first say that you are to be congratulated on taking on the burden of producing the News. Members don't realise how time consuming it can be.

Now my suggestion: as a CLPGS member for 15 years, I've received the News as edited by three different editors. I've also purchased and read all the issues going back to issue number one. I constantly refer to these issues as a source of information, which is what a Journal should be. Issue Number 161 includes non-Journal items.

What I am referring to is the advertising which is part of the issue. Previously, ads were included on a separate insert. This served two useful purposes: the ads could be read immediately and responded to, and they could be discarded when their timeliness was over. This left the articles as useful tool to be preserved. I think this former of presenting advertising should be continued. I doubt if 5 years from now it will be necessary to know that member "x" has a Edison Home for sale.

A review of the classified ads in issue 161 will show that 11 of the 15 ads will run exactly the same in at least the next four issues. Do we need a permanent volume of these ads? I doubt it.

The lack of permanent advertising (display and classified) is what has made the Hillandale News the unique publication it has been. I urge you to continue the new format but make this change immediately. I hope the other members agree.

Sincerely, Steven I. Ramm  
Philadelphia, U.S.A. 13th April

The Editor replies: The point Steven Ramm makes concerning the inclusion of advertisements in the body of the magazine as opposed to a separately produced insert is one that we



pondered over for a long while. In the end it came down to time and economics. Members should know that the inserts, including the advertisements, were collated by our Vice President Dave Roberts and inserted by him as part of his job as dispatcher of the magazine. Dave did this and much more for many years and the time had come we all thought for a rethink. The new format magazine forms a part of that rethink. The economics of the new journal as outlined by our Chairman Ted Cunningham in our last edition meant that the additional weight of insert would push up postal and packaging costs to a level that was unacceptable. So in the end the new style journal emerged in the form you see it. We all realised that some members would take the view that Steven Ramm holds and I am glad of the opportunity of explaining why adverts will be appearing as an integrated part of the "Hillandale."

Dear Editor,

Please may I make an appeal to readers for information regarding 78 rpm records made under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of New Music. This society continues to do good work for contemporary music, under the presidency of composer Elizabeth Machonchy, but it unfortunately has nothing in its own archives regarding an occasional series of records started in the mid-1940s.

So far I have traced the following records made in 1944 and 1945 by Decca - these seem to be the first four of the series, according to Gramophone reviews of the time: M565; M576; M578.

When I have collected more information I shall produce a short account of the records for the magazine. Any information on such records would be appreciated: the labels are clearly marked as being recorded under the auspices of the Committee (or Society) for the Promotion of New Music, but not necessarily on both sides!

On a lighter note, I should like to refer readers back to Hillandale 138

(June 1984):- there was an article by George Taylor on "Opera Singers in Silent Films" which mentioned Emmy Destinn singing (silently!) an aria from Mignon in a cage with a lion. The image this conjured up has always intrigued me, being rather fond of the big cats myself - although it is not clear what the significance was of the film's title "The Lion's Bride" . . . Well, quite by chance, I came upon a photograph of the intrepid singer (mime-artiste?) complete with maned co-star. For those without access to this gem, I enclose a copy.

Yours sincerely, Peter Adamson  
St. Andrews University, 28th February

Dear Mr. Martland,

In Hillandale News No.159 Mr. Barry Badham requests information about the music of Robert Stoltz.

The song "Adieu mein kleiner Gardeoffizier" is from the film "Das Lied ist aus" - or that is where it first appears. In Norway it is still used in the operetta "Im Weissen Röss'l" opus 559, 1930. I tried to find the operetta "Madama sans Anschluss" without success. I did, however, discover that these melodies were often used in revues. "Zwei Herzen im 3/4 Takt" is believed to be the first German talking picture. Another early German talkie was "Ich küsse Ihre Hand Madame." This featured, amongst others, Marlene Dietrich. The sound was dubbed: the songs were written by Dietrich and Richard Tauber. Tauber also dubbed the voice of the leading man, Harry Liedtke. This remarkable film was made in 1929 and still exists. In his book "Und kein Tag zwei" Hans Söhnker tells of the first German "Tonfilm" - "Atlantis", the story of the Titanic disaster. It featured Fritz Kortner and Willi Forst. Forst sang and accompanied himself on the piano. Söhnker reveals that this event took place between 1928 and 1929, when he was in Danzig.

The Dietrich information is to be found in Ch.Higham "The Life of Marlene Dietrich." I hope this information and the enclosed copy of a music sheet will be of help to Mr. Badham.

Sincerely yours, Tom Valle  
Oslo, Norway, 23rd February

# Regional News

by John Calvert

**Midlands Group.** 17 members attended the Group's AGM at Aston University. Chairman Eddie Dunn remarked that the Group was now entering its 21st year, and although recruiting remained a problem, attendances at meetings averaged 20-25. The major event of the past year was a 2-day exhibition of machines staged by members at Dudley Show. Another is planned for this year's Show, on 1st and 2nd August, and Group Secretary Gerry Burton suggested that it should include a marking of the Gramophone Centenary. Other plans for the coming year include Phil Bennett on Jazz, Arthur Knowles on Gerrard Hoffnung, a Musical Quiz, and a visit from a member of the George Formby Society.

The March meeting offered, first, Eddie Dunn with a programme of 4-minute Blue Amberols, and then Phil Bennett with cylinders and 78s of vintage jazz "alternatives" made some time after the original recording of a tune. For example, "Palesteena", originally recorded by the ODBJ in 1921, was heard on Blue Amberol 4226, played by the Green Brothers Novelty Band. "I'm Coming Virginia", originally recorded by Frankie Trambauer's Orchestra in 1928, was heard in Noble Sissle's later version. The most unusual item was the tune "Sugar", originally recorded in the twenties. We heard a 2-minute cylinder made in 1986 by Chris Williams (a Group member) and his Jazzers.

**Severn Vale Group.** At this Group's AGM on 16th April Chairman Lawrie Wilson reported a static membership and expressed the need to attract new members, particularly younger ones. Members expressed the view that the Society at a National level did little to promote itself: the problem should be tackled at both levels. It was agreed that Severn Vale should produce its own posters for display in music shops and information centres, and that reports of meetings should be given to the local press. Members expressed concern over the Society Bookshop, reporting long delays in execution of orders. A member said an advertisement placed for inclusion in the "Hillandale News" had still not

appeared. It was agreed that this should be pursued. Lawrie Wilson was re-elected and thanked for all his hard work. Then he, Richard Taylor, and John Calvert presented a programme of recordings.

**Channel Islands.** Thanks to Tom and Margaret Hardie of Jersey, for this letter: "We write from one of your most southerly outposts and send greetings to all members. We have been collectors of 78s over a long period, and our small collection of wind-up gramophones now has the addition of two Edison phonographs and some cylinders. Our record collection includes Jazz, Music Hall, popular singers, Dance Bands, and "oddities", and our interests have heightened since we became members of the Society. Due to our geographical position we have not managed to link visits to the UK with opportunities to meet members of the Society. However, it occurs to us that some members may holiday in Jersey, and we would extend a warm welcome, a cup of tea, and the opportunity to browse and listen on a sunny afternoon."

**Note:** Any member wishing to take advantage of this kind offer should contact the Regional News Editor, John Calvert, for the Hardie's address.

## FORTHCOMING REGIONAL MEETINGS

**Newcastle upon Tyne.** Saturdays, 2.00p.m. at the Activities Room, Science Museum, Blandford Street. July 2nd: GIGLI - by Mastermind Contestant John Taylor. September 24th: TALKING MACHINE DAY - by Fred & Cyril Hay, together with a display of Edison items. December 3rd: Traditional MAGIC LANTERN Show by Derek and Isobella Greenacre.

**Severn Vale Group.** Saturdays, 6.30p.m. at the Foley Arms, Tarrington. June 18th 5" CYLINDERS, by Mike Field. August 20th: THE EDISON VIDEO by Mike Field. October 15th: OPERATIC PRESENTATION by Gilbert Fury

## Overseas Events.

10th ANNUAL PHONOVENTION 1988, Hotel Doherty, Clare, Michigan, August 20th, 9.00 am to 4.00 p.m.

Send details of future events for inclusion to the Regional News Editor, John Calvert, [REDACTED]



# London Meetings

by Plum Label

15th March 1988

## THE GOLDEN AGE RECALLED

**C**HRIS HAMILTON made a welcome re-appearance as speaker at Bloomsbury. On this occasion he dealt with the fascinating idea of recording for posterity the characteristic sounds of vintage phonographs and gramophones playing contemporaneous records. He brought tape recordings of fourteen different machines, and played at least one example of each, showing appropriate slides of the machines on the screen.

Starting with a vintage banjo recording played on a "Trade Mark" Gramophone, a fascinating procession of machines and records moved through the early years of the twentieth century to the end of the acoustic era. Other early machines included a Model C Edison Gem, a 1900 Zonophone Standard, and a Standard "open works" machine of about 1903. Then we heard a 1906 cylinder recording of John McCormack on an Edison Home of approximately 1904. Last of the cylinder recordings featured an Amberola 75 of 1916 playing a novelty dance number.

To continue with the disc machines, Stanley Kirkby was heard on a "Trench" model Decca Dulcephone, which was followed by a Decca classic, the Model 44 portable dating from 1928. Next came some cabinet machines: we had the pleasure of hearing Louis Armstrong's version of "St. James Infirmary" on a Decca 77 with Paillard soundbox; a good machine although overshadowed by its Hayes-produced rivals. One such was the HMV Model 157, which showed its capabilities in song with more McCormack.

Next, a medium-sized re-entrant, the Model 194 of 1928. This gave full tonal value to the Afrikaaner folk singer Chris Blignaut in, naturally, "Sarie Marais". To follow, Chris let us hear an E.M. Ginn Expert Senior machine with soundbox of the same manufacture play an American Brunswick recording - and some Jack Payne as well.

The climax was the magnificent horn

gramophone designed by the late Douglas Fitzpatrick and previously installed at his home, Sheringham Hall in Norfolk. This superb machine would, we heard, be relocated and preserved at Holkham Hall, which the public may visit. Good news indeed.

Finishing with a Columbia hornless and a fine HMV 102, Chris urged us to follow his example and record our own favourite machines for the benefit of the Society's archives.

19th April 1988

## PATHE IN BRITAIN

**O**UR PAST CHAIRMAN Len Watts had originally thought that the subject of Pathé in Britain would be good for a single evening, but at an early stage in the preparation of his talk it became clear that the Pathé story could by no means be told in one session. Here, then, is a brief report on the first part.

Len gave us a concise history of the early years, and first we heard some cylinders, including a duet by Louise Kirkby Lunn and Ben Davies and a march from the Garde Republicaine, that pillar of the Pathé catalogues. We then heard hill-and-dale discs of assorted sizes and covering a most varied musical range, starting with Harry Lauder in 1904 and going on to include singers such as Alice Verlet (anonymously) and Celestina Boninsegna. Then an unfamiliar recording of the celebrated violinist Mischa Elman, followed by Billy Williams.

It has not been attempted to cover in this report the wealth of historical and other detail contained in Len's well-researched talk. The presenter will continue the Pathé story at a further meeting, and we may look forward to reading his own account in this magazine.

It is a pleasure to report that the meeting was well attended. The Meetings Secretary, much encouraged by this, and ever hopeful of greater numbers at Bloomsbury, intends to put out more chairs in future.

We all look forward to the second part of "Pathé in Britain", so watch our pages for details.

# A Reacquaintance

by Ken Loughland

**T**O THE RECORDED MUSIC enthusiast of many years' experience it sometimes happens that one comes across a voice from the past – meaning one's own past and not necessarily the singer's – which has been unheard for some time, and which stimulates a renewed interest in the artist.

A little while ago (well, about a year in fact) I found a copy of a half-forgotten twelve-inch record issued in the early thirties in the gold-label Decca-Polydor series, of Calaf's two arias from Puccini's "Turandot". I remember the record from my adolescence. The catalogue number was CA 8116, the arias "Non piangere Liù" and (of course) "Nessun dorma", and the singer the tenor Alfred Piccaver. My renewed acquaintance with the voice led me to further investigation, but before going deeper, a few words on the singer may be of interest.

Alfred Piccaver was born, according to Grove and others, in February 1884 (the same year as John McCormack) at Long Sutton in Lincolnshire, to parents of Spanish origin. He was taken by them at an early age to the United States, and spent his school years in New York. He then studied electrical engineering, and worked for a short time in the laboratories of none other than Thomas Edison, but presumably his electrical knowledge was not at that time addressed in any way to the recording of sound. In 1907 he was sent to Europe for health reasons, travelling to Austria with some musical friends who were seeking operatic engagements. They suggested to him in fun that he, as well as they, should enter for audition. The outcome of this was that he, much to his surprise, was engaged for the Prague Opera. He went on to make his debut there in a production of Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette" later that same year. He went for vocal training in Milan and Prague, and in 1910 joined the Vienna Court Opera, later the Vienna State Opera. Piccaver remained in that city to become a favourite of the Viennese

public until his retirement from the operatic stage in 1937.

His repertoire was extensive, embracing principally Italian, German and French opera, with the occasional role from other works such as Lenski in Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin." He sang with the Chicago Opera from 1923 to 1925, and also in 1924 at Covent Garden and in recital at the Royal Albert Hall. On his retirement from the Opera in 1937 (before the Anschluss) he left Austria to live in London and to teach. He returned to Vienna as an honoured guest for the reopening of the Staatsoper in 1955, resumed teaching for a while, and died in Vienna in September 1958.

Piccaver made a fair number of recordings, initially for Odeon before the first World War, and later for Polydor/Grammophon. As with so many singers, opinions differ as to his merits. On the credit side one can count accuracy of pitch and superb, McCormack-worthy breath control and a legato, or smoothness of style, which seems effortless. The timbre has been variously described as "honeyed" or "silver rather than golden", and it is instantly recognisable and difficult to confuse with that of any other singer. There are those, however, who find a nasal quality in Piccaver's voice which is unappealing. The writer does not find it so, but would have to admit that certain of the tenor's recorded performances suggest a rather casual attitude; that he is keeping some distance between himself and the music.

The writer has little experience of the Odeons, but a collection of some of Piccaver's early acoustics dating from 1912 has been issued in LP form on the Austrian "Lebendige Vergangenheit" (The Living Past) series on LV 26. In addition a set of well-sounding Polydor late acoustics (all from 1923) has been issued on LV 106. Of the first-mentioned LP collection, several of the arias from Italian and French opera are sung, to Viennese requirements, in German. In the writer's view they do not suit the spirit of the music, any more than would, say, a French libretto to *Götterdämmerung*. A good Odeon extract among others, however, is "Questo e quella" from



"Rigoletto", which is both vigorously and lyrically expressed.

The later LP (LV 106) contains some fine items. First, some Verdi: there is Manrico's aria "Ah si ben mio" from "Il Trovatore"; then a good "Ma se m'è forza perdeti" from "Un ballo in maschera", a work in which the singer frequently appeared as Ricardo from 1922 onwards, and which shows what he could achieve in the way of breath control. "Cielo e mar!" from Ponchielli's "La Gioconda" is worth keeping alongside the Gigli and Björling versions, and there are well-judged versions of the drinking song and "Mamma, quel vino . . ." from "Cavalleria Rusticana". As for "Pagliacci", like any other tenor worthy of the name, Piccaver dons the motley, puts his face in flour, and gives us a rendering of you-know-what that bears witness to his stated admiration for Caruso. There are fifteen arias on this disc, and all gave pleasure, but none more so than the short (105 seconds) simple and haunting "Amor ti vieta" (Forbidden Love) from Giordano's "Fedora", a three-act work of 1898.

The writer has not found any collection of the same artist's electric Polydors on LP, but would be glad to see such a compilation to augment the excellent LV series. In any case, quite a number of Decca-Polydor DE and CA gold-label 78s and continental pressings may be had for the looking. Two particularly good Decca-Polydors are: CA 8058, coupling "In fernem Land" and "Mein lieber Schwan" from "Lohengrin", and CA 8087 with the Prize Song and "Am stillen Herd" from "Die Meistersinger". Then there are of course the ten or so red-label British Deccas made around 1932, although these tend to be inferior to the singer's earlier recordings. Two or three Decca blue-label "F" issues also exist, but without a comparison of the matrix numbers I cannot say whether or not these are of the same takes as those that were previously issued in the "M" series. There are a few Brunswicks, too.

So much, then, for a singer who was a great favourite with the opera-going public of his day; one singer among the many who deserve to be remembered.

## Record Review

CORNWALL'S GREATEST SINGER

by Peter Martland

**R**ICHARD JOSE, or Juan Ricardo José, as he was known in the USA, was a Cornish-born counter-tenor with an extraordinary singing voice. Born in Lanner in 1862, Jose led a quite remarkable life. As a young boy he was sent to join his uncle in the Nevada goldfields. Unfortunately for the lad his uncle died before he arrived. Reduced to singing for his sustenance he was taken and educated by a local minister. Although trained as a blacksmith, Jose's powerful voice - a true counter-tenor - offered a more lucrative career.

Jose had no formal musical training, yet in the years prior to America's entry into the First World War he was a highly popular artiste, performing throughout the USA. He recorded for Victor between 1903 and 1909. The fifty or so records released formed a highly popular and lucrative counterpoise to that other great tenor in the Victor stable - Enrico Caruso.

Joe Pengelly has produced from the Victor recordings an excellent cassette introducing to us a new artist - Jose's recordings were never released in the U.K. - and to a voice which, although it was never formally trained, had a natural placement that was capable of attacking notes majestically from above. Jose's diction as it appears on this cassette is wonderful. The words have a resonance and clarity alas rarely found among singers today. Leaving aside for a moment the material Jose sings, the style employed is straight from the British folk tradition, complete with a clear Cornish accent. This is a curious factor as Dick Jose from Lanner, Cornwall, was billed as Juan Ricardo José in the USA, complete with a Spanish ancestry.

The contents of the tape are a familiar blend of ballads and sacred music. To many they will sound mawkish and innocent. But as a vehicle for the presentation of Jose's voice they serve their purpose with credit. His rendering of "When you and I were young, Maggie" is a delight on the ear. My one criticism must be that we get but eight songs and only thirty minutes of playing time for £4.00.

That said, Joe Pengelly is to be congratulated. Not only has he discharged his rôle as Cornish Bard - "Recorder of Cornish Sounds" - with distinction by bringing to our notice Richard Jose, but by producing marvellous sounds from these early recordings he has set new standards which I hope others will note and follow.

**RICHARD JOSE (1862-1941) CORNWALL'S GREATEST SINGER:** Victor Recordings 1903-1909. Available in cassette only, Price £4.00 including post UK; \$10.00 Airmail worldwide. From Joe Pengelly, [redacted]

# Plus ça change...

by Frank Holland M.B.E.

**R**EADING THROUGH Alan Hindmarch's article "The Survival of 78 rpm Records", his references to the stop and run-in grooves took me back to 1932. Around that time I made an automatic record changer, mainly with Meccano parts, capable of playing up to 18 discs. I seem to remember that the first changers, or at least the contemporary changers manufactured by EMI, could handle only eight discs. The automatic record changer I constructed consisted of a framework, about one cubic foot, made up of long angle Meccano strips. At the bottom of the changer was fixed an old vacuum cleaner motor which operated the changing mechanism. Most of this mechanism was housed just above the motor, and could not have been more "Heath Robinson." A cam was made out of a large tin lid onto which a live bent copper wire dragged and spluttered!

The pick-up was manufactured by the British Thomson-Houston Company at



Rugby, where I began my own professional career. BTH was one of the first companies to produce such products in this country, utilising resources of the General Electric Company of America

by means of a long-standing licencing agreement. The BTH pick-up was fixed at a right-angle to the end of a one-foot strip of Meccano angle-iron. A Meccano "eccentric" operated the rising motion of the pick-up. For sideways movement, cams and pieces of clock spring provided the motive power, whilst run-in grooves on records, when they came in, assisted the process.

I used a Diehl "Aristocrat" gramophone motor imported from the USA and sold by Claude Lyons of Liverpool.

They cost four guineas each: I recall funding the purchase of this motor from my own resources and three guineas given to me by an uncle as a 21st Birthday gift. It was a nice model with a velvet cover glued to a bakelite turntable; this was operated through a cork clutch on the drive shaft. (Incidentally, Claude Lyons joined my Player-Piano Group in 1958).

The record carriage hinged back from the top of the framework to which the spindle carrying the records was securely fixed. The spindle consisted of a piece of special tool steel offset at about 4" above the turntable - it was (from memory) 0.238". This step, many readers will remember, was standard on most auto-players. I developed my idea from an American advertisement for the "Capehart" changer. These early "Capeharts", together with other types of changer and jukeboxes, now command high prices among American collectors.

The record carriage tilted backwards a little when records were loaded onto the shaft. The records were then carefully gripped by hand and lowered over the turntable. At the base of the spindle a dimple had been machined. This rested on top of the domed top of the turntable vertical shaft. To reduce friction a slight touch of oil was applied.

In order to change records the bottom disc was pushed forward by two flat Meccano strips bolted together. The strips were just the right thickness, and applied pressure perfectly; the edge of the record just entered the small gap between them. To get this movement another Meccano piece - a triple throw eccentric - was used. An external switch was used to reject discs.

Frank Holland also tells of the amusement his invention caused among the apprentices at BTH where he was employed. He is still a member of the Old Apprentices Association, and wonders if any of our members worked at BTH. If so he would be delighted to hear from them directly at The British Piano Museum, [redacted]



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88

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# CLPGS BOOKSHELF

additions to the 1987 Book list new items not listed.

**B144** Encyclopaedia of Automatic Musical Instruments, — Q David Bowers over 1000 pp **£35.00**

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More new factored items will be added in due course and announced in this magazine

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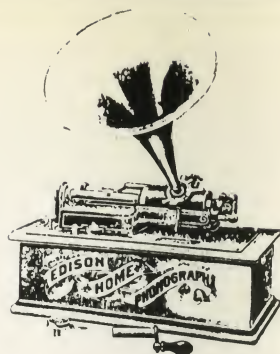
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